

Proximity  
United States Highway 61 North  
Washington vicinity  
Adams County  
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-199

HABS  
MISS,  
1 - WASH. V.,  
4 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS  
MISS,  
1-WASH.V,  
4-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PROPINQUITY

HABS No. MS-199

Location: United States Highway 61 North (off Old Washington-Selma Road), Washington vicinity, Adams County, Mississippi.

Present Owner: John F. Benoist.

Present Use: Dwelling.

Significance: The interior woodwork at Propinquity, notably the mantels and cornices, is considered to be among the finest of the Federal period in Mississippi.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1800.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a partial and incomplete chain of title to the land on which Propinquity stands. It is taken from the Adams County Landmarks Inventory compiled by the Natchez Metropolitan Planning Commission. See Parcel 13, Block 1, Tax Map 138 of Adams County, the Adams County deed books, and The American State Papers (Gales and Seaton Edition).

1786 May 6, 1786. Certificate A-762. American State Papers, p. 883. Conveys: to Benjamin Bealk by Spanish Patent for 57 f (Spanish acres).

1789 February 10, 1789. Certificate A-28. American State Papers, p. 859, to Benjamin Bealk by Spanish Patent for 800 f (Spanish acres).

1811 January 3, 1811 Deed (F/274). Benjamin Bealk to Beverley Grayson. Conveys: "A certain tract...containing eight hundred acres, more or less, being parts of two tracts of land one granted to said Benjamin Bealk by the Spanish Government, the other granted by the same government to Joseph Calvit and conveyed to Benjamin Bealk.

1811 March 2, 1811. Deed (F/411). Benjamin Grayson and wife to Alexander Covington. Conveys: "A certain tract or parcel of land containing two hundred and forty acres and twenty two hundredths situate...on the muddy fork of St. Catherine's Creek and being part of the tract of land granted by the Spanish Government to Benjamin Bealk and conveyed by him to the said Beverley R. Grayson.

## PROPINQUITY

HABS No. MS-199 (Page 2)

- 1811 March 2, 1811. Deed (F/413). Beverley Grayson and wife to Leonard Covington. Conveys: "A parcel of land situate...in the County of Adams...on the waters of St. Catherine's Creek containing ninety six acres and forty five hundredths" being part of the two tracts described above.
- 1828 April 5, 1828. Deed (Q/203). Levin Covington and Benjamin M. Covington, heirs of Leonard Covington to John W. Monette. Conveys: "All that tract...of land conveyed by Beverley R. Grayson and wife to Leonard Covington by deed above.
- 1831 November 1, 1831. Deed (W/286). John W. Monette and wife to Robert Dunbar. Conveys: that tract of land conveyed by Beverley R. Grayson and Sarah, his wife, to Leonard Covington in March of 1811.
- 1832 January 26, 1832. Deed (T/448). Robert Dunbar and Sarah Dunbar to John Branch. Conveys: the same land as described above "known by the name of Propinquity."
- 1946 April 15, 1946. Deed (5-M308). Mary E. Fauntleroy, widow, to Mary Amelia Fauntleroy, Rebecca Fauntleroy Benoist and Frank E. Fauntleroy. Conveys: An undivided five-eighths interest in and to all that certain plantation of land known as and called "Propinquity" near the village of Washington.
- 1967 October 20, 1967. Deed (10-V/581). Rebecca Fauntleroy Benoist, Mary Amelia Fauntleroy, heirs of Miss Rebecca Miller, deceased, to our son and nephew, John F. Benoist. Conveys: their two-thirds interest in the following: "A tract of land comprising 4.0 acres, more or less, and being a part of the Propinquity Plantation...specifically including the old Propinquity Plantation House."
- 1967 December 31, 1967. Deed (10-W/593). Rebecca Fauntleroy Benoist and Mary Amelia Fauntleroy to John F. Benoist (reserving unto themselves a lien). Conveys: their two-thirds interest in the following: "A tract...of land comprising 37 acres, more or less, and being part of the Propinquity Plantation.
- 1968 January 31, 1968. Deed (10-X/132 Plat). Frank E. Fauntleroy to John F. Benoist Conveys: his one-third interest in Propinquity. (See also Will Book , page 436, January 3, 1941.

4. Original plans and construction: The basic form of the house remains intact despite serious alterations to the original fabric. As constructed, Propinquity remains a simple two and one-half story, double-pile frame house with a provincial, two-piered, single-bay portion on the front elevation.
5. Alterations and additions: The original wallpaper and wall boards were replaced with modern plaster boards c. 1970. All exterior surfaces including window frames, clapboards, blinds and the entire portico have been replaced with new materials which "try" to follow the design of the original.

B. Historical Context:

According to a local writer, Propinquity was the scene of the first American political assembly in the lower Mississippi valley when a committee met there in 1797 to form a public safety organization. In 1811 Propinquity was acquired by Leonard Covington who served as a Brigadier-General in the War of 1812.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Propinquity is an example of provincial Federal, a style which is rare in Mississippi.
2. Condition of the fabric: Good.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The five bay, two and one-half story building is rectangular in shape.
2. Foundations: Brick, laid in common bond.
3. Walls: Clapboard; painted white. Areas underneath the two-tiered portico are paneled.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood frame construction.
5. Portico: A two-tiered portico, one bay wide, with slender columns, supporting a balcony and pediment, is placed on the front elevation.
6. Chimneys: End chimneys are brick with stacks pulled away from the wall at the attic level.

7. Openings: The double-leaf doors with four panels each, are set in doorways which feature narrow side lights and a rectangular transom. The windows are double-hung with nine over nine glazing at the first floor level, and nine over six at the second floor.
8. Roof: The roof is gabled and covered with asbestos shingles. The cornices consist of an unornamented vergeboard.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans: Double-pile with a one story shed addition in the rear.
2. Stairways: A mahogany stair rises in the center hall and is designed with a slender turned newel and square-sectioned baluster.
3. Flooring: Wood.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Flush paneling is used for ceilings and for secondary wall areas while plaster (since replaced with wall board) was used in more formal rooms.
5. Doorways and doors: The paneled doors are set in doorways decorated with architraves which consist of a wide, beaded fascia surrounded by a narrow backband.
6. Decorative features: The cornices are modillioned and dentiled. Federal mantels are designed with engaged columns, center medallions and delicate carvings.

D. Site:

The house faces south in a lightly wooded setting.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Oliver, Nola Nance. Natchez: Symbol of the Old South. New York: Hastings House, 1940, p. 82.

Roland, Dunbar. Mississippi: Comprising Sketches of Counties, Towns, Events, Institutions, and Persons. 3 vols. Atlanta: Southern Historical Publishing Association, 1907, p. 587.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was coordinated by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Elbert R. Hilliard, Director. Data compiled by William C. Allen, Architectural Historian, April 1975. Edited by Marion K. Schlefer, Historic American Buildings Survey, Washington, D.C. 1985.